

**May 9, 2000**

**TO:** Judges, Court Administrators, and Clerks

**FROM:** John D. Ferry, Jr.

**RE:** SCAO Administrative Memorandum 2000-05;  
Approval of Digital Audio Recording Systems

**EFFECTIVE**  
**DATE:** May 11, 2000

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Pursuant to Michigan Court Rule, Supreme Court Administrative Order, and statute the State Court Administrator is responsible for approving recording equipment used in Michigan trial courts. [*MCR 8.103, MCR 8.109, AO 1990-7, MCL 600.8611, and MCL 600.859.*]

SCAO has developed standards for audiotape equipment used to record court proceedings and published a list of approved systems. Recently, vendors have developed new audio recording systems using digital technology.

To keep pace with the new technology, SCAO has developed the Standards for Digital Audio Recording Systems, which are attached. A digital audio recording system must be certified as meeting the attached standards before it can be used to record trial court proceedings.

For a system to be certified, the trial court considering a given system must complete the Digital Audio Recording Systems Standards Checklist, also attached, verifying that the system meets the minimum standards, and submit it to SCAO. Courts are encouraged to work with system vendors to complete this self-evaluation form. SCAO will review the completed checklist and grant approval based upon it.

To assist trial court personnel in evaluating systems and completing the checklist, we have provided a glossary of technical terms; it is also attached.

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Completed checklists should be sent to:

Digital Recording Coordinator  
State Court Administrative Office  
P.O. Box 30048  
Lansing, MI 48909

Courts should develop appropriate policies and procedures governing the use of the systems they purchase. Procedures should be developed for backing up the files created by the system and periodically assessing the quality of the storage medium by testing archived files. A contingency process should also be established for backup or duplication of files in the event of obsolescence. Courts should rely on their vendor for support in developing these policies and should follow the vendor's recommended procedures designed for their specific system.

For further information, contact Matt Hanley at SCAO, Trial Court Services (phone: 517/373-7498).

Attachments

**DIGITAL AUDIO RECORDING SYSTEM STANDARDS CHECKLIST**

The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) has established the Digital Audio Recording System Standards, which govern systems used in Michigan's trial courts. This checklist is intended as a tool for courts and vendors to use in assessing a digital audio recording system's compliance with the standards.

To obtain approval for a digital audio recording system, complete and mail this checklist to: **Digital Recording Coordinator, State Court Administrative Office, PO Box 30048, Lansing, Michigan 48909**. Courts are encouraged to work with their vendors in completing this checklist. The SCAO's approval will be granted based on its review of this document and any other relevant information.

**Court Information**

|       |                |               |      |
|-------|----------------|---------------|------|
| Court | Contact person | Telephone no. | Date |
|-------|----------------|---------------|------|

**System Information**

|                      |                |               |
|----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Vendor               | Vendor Contact | Telephone no. |
| Manufacturer         | System name    | Version       |
| Hardware components: |                |               |
| Software components: |                |               |

**System Design**

Does the design utilize an open architecture approach, supporting internal and external devices using standard interfaces?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the system allow the user to use a foot pedal and headphones with standard interfaces when preparing a transcript?

☐ Yes ☐ No

**Audio Recording**

Does the system record the court's proceedings and store the recording in a digital format with a continuous time stamp?

☐ Yes ☐ No

**File Format**

Does the system store the converted audio signal in an open, publicly available (non-proprietary) digital format?

☐ Yes ☐ No

What format does the system store audio files in (e.g. WAV, MPG, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

**Long-Term Backup and Storage Medium**

Does the system create a backup of audio files for disaster recovery?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the system archive the permanent copy of the digital record on a widely available, industry accepted medium which can be stored separately from the system?

☐ Yes ☐ No

What storage medium is used to store the archive copy (e.g. CD, JAZ, DVD, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

## Playback and Transcription

Is the medium which is used to transfer the digital recordings to transcriptionists a widely available, industry accepted medium? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Which medium will be used to transfer the digital recordings to transcriptionists? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the system enable direct access to specific passages, or sections, of the recording? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What mechanisms are used to provide direct access (fast forward/rewind, search by timestamp, search using scroll bar, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the system play back the recording at a sufficiently high quality to enable a transcriptionist to prepare a complete, true, and correct transcript? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is the system able to isolate the voices of multiple speakers who speak simultaneously? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the system provide separate volume controls for each channel? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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## Annotations

Does the system include an integrated note-taking utility? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes:

Does this note-taking utility allow notes to be changed after they have been made? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does this utility provide editing functions? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does this utility require the user to export the notes to a different program to perform editing and then to reimport them into the system? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does this utility enable the user to enter information about the session (e.g. date and time, courtroom, judge, case name and number, etc.)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the system create a backup of the annotations database for disaster recovery? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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## Reliability and Security

Does the system continuously monitor all microphones and provide at least visual indication that each is picking up a signal? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the system continuously monitor the storage medium and provide at least visual indication to the operator that the signal is being recorded? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the system store the signal to two separate storage devices simultaneously? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the system periodically produce an audible alarm when the system has been put in "pause" or "mute" mode, such as during a bench conference, to alert the operator to resume normal operation when the conference has ended? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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## Integration

Are other non-system utilities (e.g. standard audio play back software) able to play back the recording created by the system? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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## Analog Duplication

Is the system is able to convert the digital recording to an analog recording and transfer it to standard cassette tapes? ☐ Yes ☐ No